



Maricopa County Board of Supervisors

News Release

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MARICOPA COUNTY SUPERVISOR MARY ROSE WILCOX URGES COMMUNITY TO COMMEMORATE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF VOTING RIGHTS ACT (VRA) OF 1965

*Crucial sections of most successful civil rights laws in American history will
expire unless Congress votes to renew*

August 6th marks the 40th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the most successful civil rights laws in American history. Maricopa County Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox urges the community to commemorate the anniversary of this landmark law.

“The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 serves as one of the Nation’s most important civil rights victories, enabling political empowerment and voter enfranchisement for all Americans,” says Supervisor Wilcox. “In particular, the VRA has helped Latinos and other minorities in their fight to gain equal and fair access to the electoral process.”

The VRA ended literacy tests, poll taxes and other purposefully prejudiced mechanisms that prevented Latinos from voting. It helped establish the right for Latinos and other language minorities to obtain language assistance during the voting process in communities across the country. By ending scores of discriminatory election practices and procedures, it has created equal opportunities for racial and ethnic population groups to elect candidates of choice to thousands of federal, state, and local offices.

In 2007, crucial sections of the VRA will expire unless Congress votes to renew them. These provisions include Section 5, which generally requires states and local jurisdictions with a documented history of discriminatory voting practices to obtain prior federal approval of planned changes in their election laws or procedures. Congress must also renew the sections of the VRA that require communities with concentrations of U.S. citizens who are not yet fully proficient in English to provide those voters with language assistance when they register, learn the details of the elections, and cast their ballots.

“We must ensure that we honor the legacy of the civil rights activists who fought, and died, for the right to vote by ensuring that our policymakers in Congress preserve and strengthen the necessary tools that will enhance the vitality of our nation’s democracy” adds Supervisor Wilcox. “Reauthorization of the 1965 Voting Rights Act is a critical next step.” # # #